

# DAPHNE OF THE FOREST

IN TWO PARTS—PART I.

BY WILLIAM FREDERICK DIX



He Filled the Cup  
Again—Again—Again!

He smiled grimly, slipped slowly back into the chair, raised the footrest, relaxed luxuriously, and gazed out over the sea. That delicious lethargy born of the increasing realization that the land, with all its turmoil, was receding farther and farther away every minute, and that there would be absolutely nothing to do for many days, stole over him and filled him with delicious calm.

"I suppose," he murmured, half to himself, "now that I am comfortably settled, the beastly owner of this chair will come along and demand it."

"I am the beastly owner of it," responded his companion.

He started electrically and half rose. "I am going to jump overboard," he said. "I simply cannot consent to live a life that is so full of shocks!"

"Better have some tea first," said the girl. "The deck steward is coming with it."

He settled back again. "Do you see that Hindu there?" he asked, pointing to a passenger sitting a little farther forward down the deck. "I had flattered myself that I had imbibed sufficient of the philosophy of his race to be fairly calm in my contemplation of material things; but this afternoon I certainly have been—er—"

"Jolted," she suggested.

"Yes, jolted," he replied. He smiled faintly. "I shouldn't have thought of the word myself; but it is apt."

"I'm flattered," said the girl.

"Not at all—that is—of course, if you want to be. Oh, hang it! Here, take some tea!"

For a moment the tinkle of china and glass mingled with the soft surge of the sea.

"Is he a Hindu, that black man?" she asked.

"He isn't a black man. He is no more kin to the Ethiopian than I am," he replied. "He comes of one of the most cultured, gentle, and aristocratic races in the world. His people were studying souls when ours were brainning one another with clubs. See his delicately cut features, his deep, wise eyes. I'll wager he is the most interesting passenger on the ship." He caught the girl's eye and added hastily, "That is—"

"Have another biscuit," she interrupted.

**D**URING the next few days the weather continued clear and the sea calm, and the passengers began to get acquainted with one another and to form little groups for bridge, shuffleboard, rope quoits, and so on. There was none of the aloofness customary on the modern Atlantic liner, where the trip is of a few days' duration only and where the passengers dress and deport themselves with the same etiquette as at a formal hotel. Here the people knew they would be thrown together for several weeks and must be a little world unto themselves. Barriston did not mingle much with the others. His cabin de luxe was an airy one on the upper deck, and he remained in it considerably, taking a leisurely promenade now and then on deck. The men had little chance to meet him, as he never went into the smoking room, and his rather distinguished bearing piqued curiosity.

When he went into dinner the first night out, an hour or so after he had had the disquieting encounter, he found himself seated at the Captain's left, and opposite him sat the heroine of that occasion. To her he was formally presented by the Captain, in whose charge she seemed to be. He bowed and murmured her name, "Miss Forrest," with entire conventionality.

Occasionally he would sit beside her, as their steamer chairs happened to be adjoining, and then his habitual reserve seemed to be less marked, as the other passengers frequently noticed him in animated conversation; though as soon as he left her he became as inscrutable as before. He and the Hindu soon fell into an acquaintance and spent much time with each other. Frequently, after a short stroll on deck together, the two would retire to Barriston's cabin and spend long hours there.

"The Swami Sundra Manya is the most wise and fascinating of men!" Barriston exclaimed to Miss Forrest one day, dropping into his chair beside her. "By Jove! he makes me ashamed of our civilization!" he continued. "Here are we, slaves to elaborate food and clothes and overfurnished houses, and so many physical necessities that it takes a fortune to buy enough to satisfy our wants, while he finds the highest happiness when he lives in a cave up there in the Himalaya hills somewhere

**B**RILLIANT sunshine deluged the lee deck of the *Daphne* on her first afternoon out from San Francisco, and sparkled upon the brasswork and fresh white paint. The deck steward was busily arranging the steamer chairs in a long line against the deckhouses, and the little group of passengers were settling themselves in them, scrutinizing one another with politely concealed interest and slowly adjusting themselves to the sea life to follow, which must necessarily be of several weeks' duration. The blue sky gleamed above, and the blue sea sparkled all about them, and the usual bouquet of overheated machinery oil, damp rubber, mosaic floor covering, and coffee grounds floated up from below and out through the companionway into the cool sea air.

Brooke Barriston, Harvard '99, six feet, slender, clean shaven, and garbed in English flannels, immaculately white, stepped out from a cabin de luxe and somewhat absently glanced about him. The deck steward instantly detached himself from a robust female with a Scottish tam o' shanter skewered to her iron gray hair and hurried to him. He showed him to his steamer chair, took his rug from him, and spread it over it. Barriston turned away for a turn or two on deck before ensconcing himself, and came into violent contact with another passenger who had just turned from a group with whom she had been talking. So violent was the collision that both staggered. Barriston, in a moment of horror, felt his foot crushing hers, his chin smote against her forehead, and their respective elbows by some devilish freak of Fate quite dislodged the breath from each other's anatomies. Barriston clutched the

girl to save her from falling, and for a moment each stared aghast and inarticulate at the other. Then the girl sank into Barriston's chair, and both breathed hard. Six bells struck with unpleasant distinctness.

"I beg—I beg—good heavens, what an ass I—I hope you're not—let me get you some—" maundered Barriston.

"Certainly—not at all—I'm not—thanks, and I don't need any," replied the young woman, answering each of his ejaculations categorically and chronologically. Then the color flooded back into her face, which had gone a bit white, and this, combined with a sparkle lurking somewhere deep behind her eyes, caused the young man to look at her with sudden intentness. Then he sank into an empty chair beside her, and, without realizing what he was doing, began to cover her feet with his rug.

He deplored the silence; but was absolutely impotent to break it. At last she spoke.

"It really was perfectly inexcusable. No apology is possible from either of us. With this great wide deck all about us—no, it was simply unpardonable; so let's not try to."

"I must make amends, anyway," he argued.

"No," she replied; "for that would impose a similar obligation on me. There is only one thing to do. Let it be a sealed book between us and—"

"Talk about something else," he concluded.

"That would be far better," she assented.

"Ah—er—are you going far?" he asked vacantly.

Her quick laughter brought to him the realization that, as the *Daphne* had just left San Francisco, and her first port was Sydney, Australia, quite in another part of the world altogether, his companion, beyond peradventure, was going far.

"I get off at the next station," she replied demurely.